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crafts. There is besides a detailed and interesting account of a long strike among the printers at Lyons and at Paris from 1539 to 1542, which bears so many familiar marks that it is hard to realize that it took place centuries ago and not within recent decades.

The French are just beginning to realize what a splendid body of material for their social history is in existence and to exploit it with their usual keenness and industry. There are three volumes of gild statutes for the city of Paris which have been edited by M. de Lespinasse, and other similar collections are being made for other French cities. The abundance of documents of this kind is remarkable. The activity of royal administrative officials, the consistent effort which the kings made from the middle of the fifteenth century onward to bring under their own regulation the industrial classes from which so much of their pecuniary and moral support was drawn, brought about the habit of enregistration to a degree unknown in any other country of Europe. It is these registered ordinances, concessions, and agreements, in addition to royal decrees, to the chronicles, and to the pleadings in law-suits, that are now being utilized in such works as those of M. Fagniez and this of M. Hauser, to give us a quite new knowledge of earlier social conditions. That this knowledge is still not very well assimilated and generalized, that it is somewhat in the catalogue style is the principal, if not the only adverse criticism we have to make of the book under review.

E. P. CHEYNEY.

La France au Milieu du XVIII^e Siècle, d'après le Journal du Marquis d'Argenson. Publié par ARMAND BRETTE. (Paris: Armand Colin et Cie. 1898. Pp. xxxv, 413.)

THE memoirs of the Marquis of Argenson are familiar to students; they contain in eight portly volumes much that is interesting and much more that is unimportant. The marquis was a person of active mind, who for a few months was minister under Louis XV. In office, he showed himself a man of integrity, but not of sagacity; with the best of intentions he usually decided on the worst of policies.

All his life he kept a journal, in which he noted the news and rumors of the court, in which he devoted much space to the expression of his animosities, which were numerous, and still more space to his chances of political advancement, in which years of discouragement did not destroy his hopes. Mingled with a great deal that is valueless, are reflections on the condition of affairs that are striking from their justice, and conjectures as to the tendency of the French government, some of which proved to be marvellously near the truth. M. Armand Brette has undertaken to cull from these voluminous memoirs what is most valuable for historical students, and these he has put in one moderate sized volume. It is a work of some utility. The compilation of M. Brette presents in compact shape extracts, which together give us a picture of the condition of France in the middle of the last century. Argenson is, indeed, an au-

thority who must be used with some degree of care. He was an intelligent and patriotic citizen, distressed at the abuses which he found in political life, and often gifted with an accurate vision of the results to which such abuses would lead. But he was prone to exaggeration, and by no means accurate in his statements. From his memoirs, we can obtain just ideas of general conditions, rather than trustworthy information about actual occurrences.

The picture he gives is a gloomy one, and he dwells with iteration on its most discouraging feature, the incurable badness of the government. "The bad results of our absolute monarchy," he writes, "would make one believe that it is the worst of all government. . . . We see this in full display under the present ruler, a prince who is mild but inert, letting the abuses grow which will result in the ruin of the kingdom; there are no reforms, there is no improvement, officials are selected without intelligence, ancient prejudices are adopted without examination, all working to the nation's harm. . . . In the meantime, public opinion advances and mounts and grows, and this it is that may start a revolution."

In this inert government, slowly drifting to leeward, the worst evil was taxation, unwisely imposed and corruptly collected. "The public treasury," writes the marquis, "is like an insatiable abyss, and yet it cannot suffice for all the needs of prodigality. The officers of finance gain much, the people lack everything. . . . The arbitrary system of the *taille* is the worst evil of the state; the receivers of the *taille* grow rich, the expenses of collections are greater even than the tax itself."

Any increase in prosperity resulted only in increased taxation. "The collector in my village said the *taille* ought to be increased this year. He had noticed the peasants were fatter than elsewhere, that they fared well and prospered well. It is such reasoning," continues the writer, "that discourages the peasants, and would have made Henry IV. weep."

It was not often that an official could find grounds for increased taxation in the prosperity of the peasants. "I am now in the country," writes Argenson, "I see misery everywhere, and hear no talk of anything else." "I am at present at my home in Touraine. I see only a lamentable condition of misery; it is no longer the feeling of need, it is despair which possesses the inhabitants; their only desire is for death."

Doubtless the marquis, justly irritated at the results of misgovernment, sometimes exaggerated the evil conditions he saw. Extreme poverty, general though not universal in the country, was accompanied by growth in wealth and population in the cities. Even Argenson in his laments expresses wonder at the steady rise in the value of land in Paris, for which he suggests every explanation but the true one. But whether the peasants' lot was growing worse, or the manufacturers' and merchants' lot was growing better, all worked together towards the overthrow of a government that was no longer fit to govern. "All the orders are discontented," says our writer, "and the common people are consumed

in misery. . . . All these materials are combustible, an *émeute* can cause a revolt, and a revolt a revolution." In all the eight volumes of memoirs, there was no more accurate statement.

JAMES BRECK PERKINS.

Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Edward Gibbon. Edited with Introduction and Notes by OLIVER FARRAR EMERSON, A.M., Ph.D., Professor of Rhetoric and English Philology in Western Reserve University. (Boston and London: Ginn and Co. 1898. Pp. lxxv, 279.)

THIS edition of Gibbon's *Autobiography* is characterized by a reconstruction of the text on the basis of the recently published original drafts. In framing this new text Professor Emerson begins with draft "F," to use the designation of the Murray edition, as far as it goes, and then adds in order such portions of B, C and E as are not repetitions of what has already been given. The texts of these drafts are given without interpolation or suppression. The rest of the material which the first Lord Sheffield used in the construction of his text is presented in the introduction and notes. This is also the first edition of the classic to receive systematic annotation. The editor has prefaced his text with a full and discriminating introduction which gives much evidence of careful research.

Unfortunately, one exceptionally valuable contribution to Gibbon literature has escaped his notice. I refer to the late Gen. Meredith Read's *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy from Roman Times to Voltaire, Rousseau and Gibbon* (Chatto and Windus, 1897). The last 250 pages of Vol. II. are devoted to Gibbon and contain a mass of hitherto unpublished materials throwing light on every phase of Gibbon's life in Switzerland. In particular Gen. Read gives many extracts from Gibbon's diaries and from the letters and journals of his friends. With this work at his side, Professor Emerson would have found the task of annotation lightened, and he would not have been obliged to say of Allemand, for example, p. 226, "Nothing seems to be known of this clergyman except what Gibbon tells." Read devoted a chapter to Allemand, (II. 134-158), and printed selections from his inedited correspondence.

The task of the first annotator is always a perplexing one, but Professor Emerson has acquitted himself very well. He has blinked no difficulties and he has been able to trace all but one or two of the literary references. One of these, curiously enough, has been printed by every editor in the unintelligible contraction found in Gibbon's manuscript as "Ramusius de Bello C. Paro." This he identified and prints as "De Bello Constantinopolitano."

That there should be a few mistakes in such pioneer work is not surprising. On p. 207, Laurence Echard, the historian, is taken for a French writer and the titles of some of his works are given in French. P. 222, for Boehart, read Bochart. On p. 237 Gibbon's remark that